

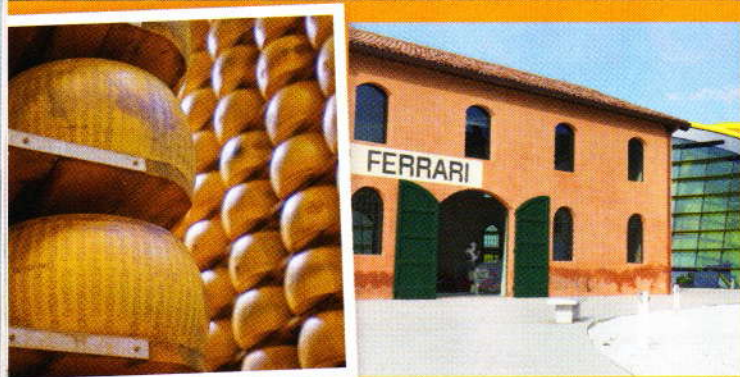
Modena love:
The city's historic
cathedral remains a
treasured landmark.

Destination
FABULOUS!



A VISIT TO PAVAROTTI
LAND IS MUSIC TO SHARON
STEPHENSON'S EARS

Bravo, BOLOG



Insider's guide to... Bologna

WHAT TO EAT: Everything. Bologna is one of Italy's most food-obsessed cities and the home of balsamic vinegar, Parmigiano-Reggiano, prosciutto, tortellini and ragù (bolognese).

BEST DRINK: The sparkling red and white lambrusco wines also call this region home. Cheers!

DON'T MISS: The two Ferrari museums. One is built around the factory in Maranello and the other, just up the road,

is dedicated to the life of its founder, Enzo Ferrari. Even non petrol-heads can't help but fall in love with these mechanical beasts.

GETTING THERE: Emirates started flying to Bologna, its 38th European destination, on November 3. All four daily Emirates flights from Auckland provide direct connections at Dubai northbound with the airline's services to Bologna. For more information, visit emirates.com/nz.

"State reason for visit," says the cranky immigration official at Bologna's G Marconi Airport.

"To see Pavarotti Land," I meekly whisper.

Suddenly his face creases into a huge grin and he quickly stamps my passport.

That's because Luciano Pavarotti, the larger-than-life tenor who shuffled off to the great opera house in the sky in 2007, remains one of Italy's favourite sons.

Pavarotti was born and lived in Modena, 40 minutes drive from Bologna in the heart of northern Italy's Emilia-Romagna region. There must have been something in the water, because this small industrial town also produced Enzo Ferrari, who created some of the most famous vehicles in the world, as well as the three Ducati brothers

who lent their names to the famous, lipstick-red motorbikes.

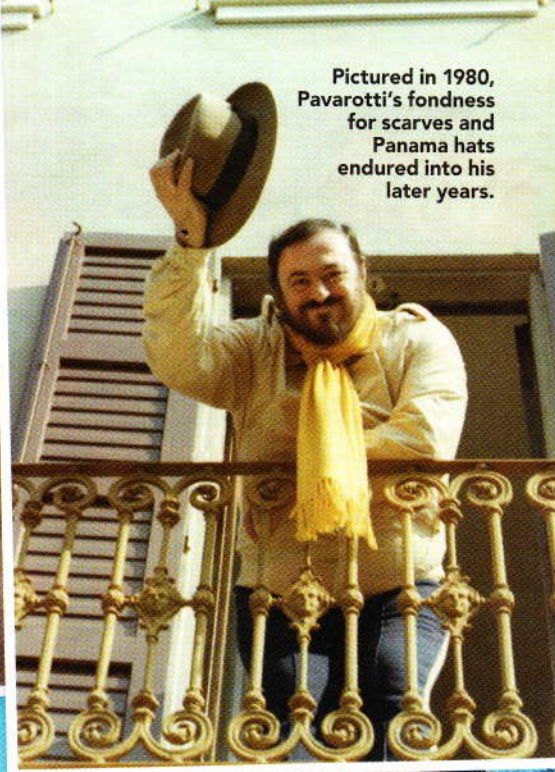
On the fringes of Modena, where the eight-lane Autostrada dumps onto a narrow country lane, is where you must go to find Pavarotti Land. Given the name, I'm expecting a theme park with fairground rides, candy floss and twinkling lights. That's my first mistake.

It turns out someone in Modena's marketing department has played fast and loose with the truth: Pavarotti Land isn't a theme park, but where the maestro lived with his wife Nicoletta and daughter Alice for three years. What's more, the butterscotch-coloured home has been left much the same as it was when Pavarotti roamed its corridors.

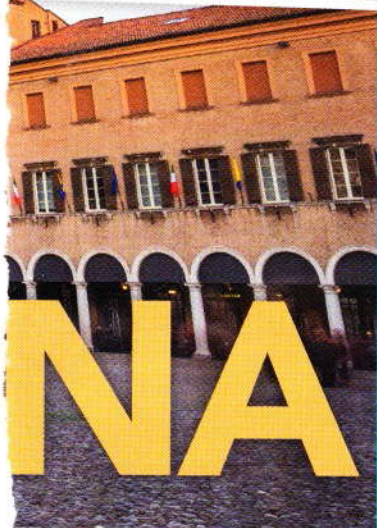
My second mistake is imagining a sort of Graceland for opera buffs. But there's no



Stars in his eyes: The singer's piano is still decorated with photos of him with his famous friends.



Pictured in 1980, Pavarotti's fondness for scarves and Panama hats endured into his later years.



The former home of the world's bestselling classical artist has remained largely unchanged since he passed away in 2007. Framed number-one records and other memorabilia are still displayed throughout the many rooms.

mansion, no tacky gold-encrusted furniture, just a modest family home. Best of all, there are no annoying tourists to ruin the view – on the sunny Friday we visit, it's just the four of us, plus a groundsman intent on taming the shrubbery.

And unlike Graceland, where Elvis' second-floor rooms are off limits, here visitors can access all areas, including the bedroom where the King of the High Cs lost his battle to pancreatic cancer, aged 71.

We pick up our audio guides from the 16th-century stables next to the house, which were converted into a café on the opera legend's orders.

The ground floor opens onto the living room, where a grand piano is strewn with photos of Pavarotti and his famous friends, including Princess Diana and U2's Bono.

Upstairs, I learn about the signature handkerchief he used to help overcome his nerves during performances. In his dressing room, there are neat stacks of them, along with his favourite Panama hats, Hermès scarves and Hawaiian shirts.

On the top floor, visitors get a whistlestop tour of the maestro's operatic history, including his over-the-top stage costumes, his oil paintings and a wall of photos featuring everyone from George Michael and Michael Jackson to Mariah Carey and Giorgio Armani.

And then there are the framed letters: from Hillary Clinton and Bruce Springsteen, from Frank Sinatra telling him his rendition of *My Way* brought him to tears, and from Sting, thanking him for a holiday.

Downstairs, a video of the famous Pavarotti & Friends concerts, which were filmed nearby, plays on a loop.

And everywhere I go, that treacle-rich voice croons to me, a reminder of why the larger-than-life Italian was the world's bestselling classical artist, with



more than 100 million records sold since the 1960s, including the first classical album to reach number one in the pop charts.

Drunk on opera, I wander the grounds where one of his many quotes catches my eye: "One of the nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop doing whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating."

I couldn't agree more. ■